

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 13270 311820Z
ACTION MCT-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13270

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, EAIR, IN
SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF BONN SUMMIT ANTI-HIJACKING
DECLARATION

REF: STATE 212172

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREEMENT AMONG SUMMIT GOVERNMENTS REPORTED REFTEL, GERMAN AMBASSADOR DIRK ONCKEN CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE AUGUST 29 TO REQUEST FORMALLY ON BEHALF OF THE SEVEN GOVERNMENTS, THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT "JOIN IN THE COMMITMENTS" OF THE BONN ANTI-HIJACKING DECLARATION. ONCKEN MADE ORAL PRESENTATION DURING A CONVERSATION THAT LASTED OVER ONE-HALF HOUR AND GAVE VAJPAYEE A DOCUMENT MARKED "NON-PAPER". ONCKEN CONCLUDED THAT VAJPAYEE HAD NEITHER ACCEPTED NOR REJECTED THE REQUEST.

2. IN A REPORT TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OTHER SIX EMBASSIES AUGUST 30, ONCKEN SAID IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY WOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER IN THE CONTEXT OF ON-GOING CONSIDERATION OF TERRORISM AND RELATED ISSUES IN THE UNITED NATIONS. VAJPAYEE'S RESPONSE TO ONCKEN'S OPENING REMARKS WAS ASK WHETHER THE TOPIC WAS NOT ALREADY BEING DEALT WITH IN UN DISCUSSIONS OF THE GERMAN-PROPOSED TREATY ON THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 13270 311820Z

TAKING OF HOSTAGES. ONCKEN REPLIED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF JOINING THE SUMMIT DECLARATION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SEPARATELY BY THE GOI SINCE IT DEALT SPECIFICALLY WITH HIJACKING. THIS DID NOT MEAN, ONCKEN CONTINUED, THAT THE SUMMIT GOVERNMENTS' ACTION COULD NOT ALSO BE DISCUSSED IN THE APPROPRIATE UN CONTEXT. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT, IN ADDITION TO CONSIDERING THE REQUEST TO JOIN COMMITMENTS OF THE DECLARATION, THE

GOI WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THE DECLARATION AT THE UN. WHILE ONCKEN WAS LEAVING THE BUILDING HE EMPHASIZED TO JOIN SECRETARY (WESTERN EUROPE) MADHAVAN THAT THE FRG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS EXPECTED A REPLY TO HIS DEMARCHE. MADHAVAN IMPLIED IN RESPONDING THAT MINISTRY'S UN DIVISION WOULD HAVE A LARGE ROLE TO PLAY IN FORMULATING THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION.

3. VAJPAYEE HAD ALSO NOTED TO ONCKEN THAT THE SUMMIT GOVERNMENTS COULD NOT COUNT ON SUPPORT FROM ALL COUNTRIES (THAT IS TO SAY, THE MIDDLE EAST) AND THAT THAT WAS "NOT AN UNESSENTIAL VIEWPOINT." ONCKEN REPLIED BY UNDERSCORING THE BROADER ASPECTS OF HIJACKING AND TERRORISM, THE PROSPECT OF TERRORIST GROUPS OPERATING IN INDIA, THE NEED TO PROTECT THE SAFETY OF INNOCENT PEOPLE, AND THE "HUMANITARIAN" ASPECT IN GENERAL "REGARDLESS OF THE MOTIVATION" OF THE HIJACKER. HE TOLD EMBASSY REPS THAT HE SENSED THAT VAJPAYEE "OPENED SOMEWHAT" TO THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT.

4. VAJPAYEE ALSO ASKED ONCKEN WHETHER THE SEVEN GOVERNMENTS WERE SETTING UP MACHINERY OR A SYSTEM FOR REACTING TO HIJACKING INCIDENTS. ONCKEN REPLIED THAT THE GOVERNMENTS DID NOT WANT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE THE DECLARATION BUT EACH WAS COMMITTED TO REACT IMMEDIATELY AND NOT TO "STAND APART." ONCKEN TOLD EMBASSY REPS THAT HE HAD LEFT THE MATTER VAGUE. TOWARD THE END OF THE BRIEFING HE ADDED THAT HE HAD TOLD VAJPAYEE THAT ANY GOVERNMENT JOINING THE DECLARATION WOULD BE OBLIGED TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 13270 311820Z

ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS OWN LAWS. FRG EMBASSY OFFICER AFTER THE MEETING EXPLAINED THAT THIS POINT HAD BEEN OMITTED FROM THE "NON-PAPER" TEXT SENT FROM BONN BECAUSE OF AMERICAN EMBASSY'S REQUEST IN THE GROUP'S PRELIMINARY MEETING HERE. THIS WAS THE ONLY CHANGE IN BONN-PROPOSED TEXT EXCEPT FOR SOME SOFTENING OF VERB FORMS.

5. OFFERING HIS PERSONAL VIEWS ON PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS OF THE DEMARCHE, ONCKEN TOLD EMBASSY REPS THAT VAJPAYEE WAS "READY TO LISTEN." HE "HAD THE IMPRESSION" THAT VAJPAYEE WAS MORE OPEN TO ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE DECLARATION THAN THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS BUREAUCRACY. WHILE THE GOI COULD BE SYMPATHETIC TO APPEALS TO CONTAIN TERRORISM, IN ONCKEN'S VIEW THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF JOINING THE DECLARATION WERE SERIOUS FOR THE GOI. THE DECLARATION "EMANATED FROM THE WEST" AND THE MINISTRY WOULD CALCULATE THAT ADHERENCE WOULD TARNISH INDIA'S IMAGE AS A THIRD WORLD SPOKESMAN AND MIGHT AFFECT ITS RELATIONS WITH LIBERATION GROUPS. ONCKEN CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT THE GOI WOULD COME OUT WITH FULL SUPPORT FOR THE DECLARATION, AND THUS HE HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR A FALL-BACK POSITION: ORAL SUPPORT BY THE INDIAN DELEGATION AT THE FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SESSION, EITHER DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OR DURING THE DISCUSSION OF TERRORISM-RELATED ITEMS. HE SUGGESTED THAT ANY FOLLOW-UP BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP BE TARGETED AT THE MINISTRY'S UN DIVISION.

6. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY CONCURS IN THE BROAD OUTLINE OF ONCKEN'S ANALYSIS. THE GOI HAS RECOGNIZED TWO POLICY GOALS OF DIRECT NATIONAL INTEREST: THE CONTAINMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND THE MAINTENANCE OF NON-ALIGNED SOLIDARITY, IN PARTICULAR ITS RELATIONS WITH ARAB AND AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS. ON BALANCE THE LATTER IS OF GREATER IMMEDIATE IMPORTANCE THAN THE FORMER, BUT WE CAN EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT ANTI-TERRORIST PROPOSALS (E.G. THE CIVIL AVIATION CONVENTIONS) WHEN THIS DOES NOT ISOLATE THEM
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 NEW DE 13270 311820Z

FROM THE REST OF THE THIRD WORLD.

7. THE AMBASSADOR PLANS TO SEEK AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE ONCKEN'S DEMARCHE AT THE MINISTRY. IT APPEARS FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE THAT ONCKEN'S SUGGESTION THAT WE ENCOURAGE SOME EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT AT THE UNGA HAS MERIT, BUT WE WILL AWAIT THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION OF TACTICAL QUESTIONS BEFORE PUSHING THAT IDEA HERE.
GOHEEN

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